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WAR FOOD ADMINISTRATION  
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CONTAINERS FOR FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

More containers are expected to be required for fresh fruits, vegetables, and potatoes in 1944 than were used in 1943. The total production of fruits was less during the past year than can be reasonably expected in 1944. The 10% increase in vegetable acreage goals will, if achieved, likely increase the volume of these commodities which will be produced. In like manner, the requested increases in Irish and sweet potato plantings should result in a greater volume of production.

Special effort and adapted programs will be necessary in order to assure containers for this production. These adaptations will require some shifts from wood to non-rigid containers and a greater salvage and re-use of secondhand packages.

WOOD CONTAINERS

Two major factors are effecting the supply of wood containers which will be available to fruit and vegetable shippers. These are, (1) a shortage of material for making packages and (2) increasing requirements for containers for other purposes.

Owing to War programs the consumption of lumber has out-run production the past two years. This deficit has been made up by in-roads into dwindling inventories and by imports. At the present time, however, reserves are at such a low point and so unevenly distributed that they can not be relied upon to adequately fill the gaps between needs and production. The supply situation for container veneer is similar to that of lumber. Current production is estimated to be running short of needs by about 20%.

Before the War, only about 15% of the total lumber consumed was used for containers and other shipping purposes, including dunnage. Also at that time, about one-third of this total was used for agricultural purposes. However, owing to increased demands for wood shipping material and restrictions on other uses of lumber, about 40% of all the lumber used in 1943 will be for this purpose. This proportion will likely increase to 50% in 1944. In the meantime, the proportion of all wood which is used for shipping agricultural products has dropped from about one-third to one-sixth of the total.

Various programs are being developed to conserve material and stretch the limited supply as far as possible. These programs are directed toward conserving wood for new containers, the use of substitute materials and the re-use of secondhand packages. Amendments have been issued to the War Production Board, Order L-232 limiting the use of

new wood containers for shipping table and juice grapes, carrots, melons, lettuce, celery, cauliflower, cucumbers, radishes, cabbage, white potatoes, green corn, rutabagas and topped turnips. The vegetables in this group are those for which the War Food Administration is not developing special production programs or for which containers of other materials can be substituted. In addition to the above limitations, a program for the shipment of a minor portion of citrus fruits in other than wooden containers, probably will be worked out. A companion measure to these limitations will be an adjustment by the Container Division of the War Production Board in the preference ratings for containers for fruits and vegetables. Under this adjusted program, all fruit and vegetable containers will be placed in the same priority group.

The maximum utilization of secondhand packages is being encouraged. Furthering this, a special rate for shipping these packages from all points in Official Classification Territory to all points in Southern Freight Association Territory became effective September 27. This rate which is  $23\frac{1}{2}\%$  of first class will permit the shipment of packages from the terminal markets, where they are accumulated, into distant producing districts at a nominal cost. Additional programs are being developed which, if adapted, will extend these rates into additional territory.

#### FIBREBOARD

It is not likely that any more fibreboard packages will be available for agricultural products in 1944 than was the case in 1943. In fact, the supply may be reduced.

Inventories of cordwood and paper stock are approaching dangerously low levels. There is in operation plenty of paper mill and pulp manufacturing facilities to supply all the paper needed for the War Effort and civilian requirements, and there is also ample capacity in the box factories to produce these containers, but the supply of raw materials to producing mills remains the bottleneck. This is due primarily to the shortage of cordwood from which the great majority of all cartons of paperboard is manufactured. The receipts of pulp wood at mills during the first eight months of 1943 were 19% below that of the same period of 1942.

#### BAGS

The overall supply of textile and paper bagging materials is not sufficient to meet all requirements. However, through the cooperative efforts of the War Production Board and the War Food Administration a sufficient supply of materials is expected to be available to provide burlap, cotton, and paper bags for agricultural needs this year if we conserve our present bag supply.

BURLAP: The supply of burlap has increased over the past three or four months, and indications are that we may have a continued increase in burlap imports. This improved supply position is dependent upon the conditions in Calcutta, India, shipping facilities to this country, plus military requirements.

Our supplies of lightweight burlap are, however, not sufficient to meet all requirements, but 10 ounce burlap is available in sufficient quantity to make up for the short lightweight position. Bag manufacturers have been allocated a maximum of 20% lightweight for the period of September, October, November and December, 1943.

COTTON: Production and manpower problems point to reduced supplies of cotton bagging materials, but the increased burlap supply is expected to more than offset this reduction.

OPEN MESH: Expect to have sufficient materials for increased production of about 10% over the past 12 months; however, because of increased requirements for citrus, cabbage, corn, carrots, etc., all requirements for this type of bag for packaging potatoes, for example, may not be provided for. Potatoes can be packed in burlap, cotton, and paper bags, and sufficient materials will be available.

PAPER: The supply of all paper and wood materials has tightened considerably; but we feel sufficient paper containers will be available for all agricultural requirements.

